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ABSTRACT

This booklet briefly outlines the cyclical process of ongoing planning as it should be employed by school administrators and offers lists of do's and don'ts for effective ongoing planning. The discussion is organized in three main sections that correspond to the main stages of the program planning cycle--program monitoring, program evaluation, and decision-making. Each of these sections contains a list of do's and don'ts and a short outline of recommended procedures. The fourth and final section presents sample worksheets that illustrate the use of the ongoing planning process for an instructional component and an instructional support component. (JG)

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A Guide for
Ongoing Planning

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Prepared by
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CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Ongoing Planning as Continuing Program Development

Ongoing planning is a cyclical process that keeps a program current with changing needs and conditions. A program using good ongoing planning (monitoring, evaluation, and decision making) is one that can be effectively managed, as adjustments in it are based on a knowledge of what is and what is not working in the program, and why. Decisions to change the program, therefore, can be made throughout the year as information is generated, rather than just once a year when plans are being written.

I. Monitoring the Implementation of the Program

- **To what extent have provisions been made for monitoring the implementation of the program?**
- **How clearly have the following questions been answered?**
  - **What information is important in judging how well the program is working?**
  - **How and when can this information best be collected?**
  - **Who should review the information?**
- **To what extent are the provisions for monitoring being carried out?**
- **How clearly established and timely are the interim points for examining the program?**

You may recognize the above questions from the "Program Quality Review Instrument–1976/77" that recently was sent to California's schools. The questions themselves indicate the general steps in the "monitoring" segment of an ongoing planning process. The concept of monitoring certainly is not new. The monitoring process can help you to organize some things your school already is doing, and it can help you to illustrate the importance of monitoring to the whole planning process.

On the following pages are some Do's and Don'ts that may help you recognize the monitoring that you already are doing. The section after the Do's and Don'ts is an outline of a procedure to monitor the implementation of your program.

Monitoring

Don'ts

- DON'T look at all components and solution procedures at once. You really can't anyway, so don't kid yourself.

- DON'T assume that predetermined information requirements are sufficient and ask only the questions that are mandated by the state or federal agencies. The most important information for you may not be the number of participants in each grade, number of personnel, test results for each component, or the extent to which objectives are achieved.

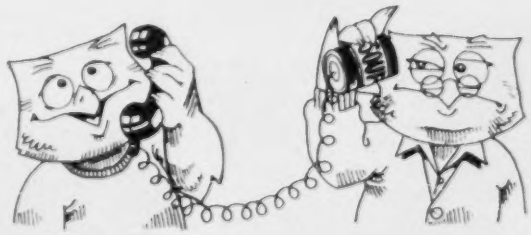
- DON'T collect information unless you have decided what you are going to do with it.

Do's

- DO choose to look at a new or controversial feature of the program; for example, the solution procedures in reading or in staff development that may soon be considered by the school board, principal, school advisory committee, or staff for continuation, revision, or elimination.

- DO specifically decide what you most need to know about how a certain feature of a program is working; for example, what evidence exists that:
  - The strategy is doing what it is supposed to be doing.
  - The time, money, and personnel required to do it are being used effectively.
  - The strategy is better than previous or alternative program strategies.
  - The strategy is having good effects on students.

- DO ask any important questions that will aid you in making decisions to modify the program. You must decide what information *you* need.



Don'ts

- DON'T collect information that is different from that which you planned to collect. Neither should you try to collect all the information available.
- DON'T collect information in a haphazard way, such as:
  - At various times, if the specific time the information is collected is important
  - From various types of people, if only teachers or parents or students are to respond
  - With unclear or different directions for responses
- DON'T organize and use the information only at the end of the year. By the end of the year, if successful strategies have been found, everyone should have been alerted so he or she can be adapting them to his or her part of the program. If strategies have not worked out, they should be modified early so that the resulting damage can be minimized.
- DON'T assume that the district project director or the principal alone will be able to ensure that all the information is collected.
- DON'T expect that communication will be effective unless you continue to work on it. Communication is essential if decisions about the program are to be made in an informed and enlightened way by those who must make them.

Do's

- DO select the same information that you decided you would collect, and gather it in the way that was planned.
- DO collect information that will answer the questions you have chosen. For example:
  - Are students reading better, quicker, and with more insight and comprehension?
  - How much time does a particular strategy require, and are people happier with it?
  - What do students think about the strategy, and has their behavior changed?
  - Are students showing more progress in mathematics at this date than they did last year at this same time?
- DO collect information early and frequently enough so that decisions can be made throughout the year as to whether an alternative strategy might be better. Choose specific months for evaluating the collected information that will help the decision-making process, such as November, March, May, or whenever.
- DO select a representative committee (or component committee) and a chairperson to be responsible for deciding how the information is to be collected and for ensuring that the information is collected.
- DO make communication one of this group's high priorities so that ways can be found to keep informed all those with a need to know what is going on. Keep people informed by means of daily bulletins or presentations at weekly staff meetings. By rotating memberships on the committee, more people can be kept informed.
- DO make sure that the collected information gets to the people who will evaluate it and that the evaluation findings get to those who make the decisions.

An Outline for Monitoring

Monitoring the implementation of the program amounts to observing its progress systematically.

Because all activities cannot be observed simultaneously, monitoring should allow for some priorities to be set among the areas of the program that need to be examined.

You may find it useful to adapt the following steps to your particular needs. You can use them to monitor the implementation of your program.

A. **List priorities.**

1. Identify those issues that require information for future decisions pertaining to problems or areas of special interest.
2. State the issues in question form so that decisions can be made about the information that is to be collected to help resolve the issues.

B. **Consider timing and methods.**

1. Decide how and when the information can best be collected so that those involved in the collection can be trained and so that the actual collection does not conflict with other activities.
2. Set dates for the analysis in advance. The dates should be appropriate for the time when decisions will have to be made to modify the program.

C. **Assign the responsibility for the monitoring.**

1. Select someone to be responsible for the monitoring.
2. Use evaluation personnel to help design the monitoring.
3. Establish a means of internal communication that will create a general awareness of ongoing planning.

D. **Use the procedures that have been established to collect the information.**

II. Evaluating Information About the Program

- **How clearly have procedures for evaluation at interim points provided for:**
  - **Analyzing the collected information**
  - **Interpreting the analysis**
- **How thoroughly has the following information about the program been evaluated:**
  - **Quality review of the school plan by state and/or district reviewers**
  - **Student assessment data and other measures of accomplishment from the previous year**
  - **Information collected from monitoring the implementation of the program**

The preceding questions from the "Program Quality Review Instrument–1976/77" refer to the part of the cyclical ongoing planning process that is used to evaluate the information collected about the program. Several cautions about evaluation should be made at this time. They are the following: (1) collection of information is often followed directly by decision making while the organizing, analyzing, and interpreting of the information is neglected; (2) often evaluation is carried out, but without regard to the separate steps of organizing and analyzing the information and interpreting the results; and (3) the critique of the plan, student assessment data, and other pertinent information from the evaluation process may be overlooked.

The following pages may clarify the evaluation portion of the ongoing planning process. They contain some Do's and Don'ts and an outline of the decision-making steps.

Evaluation

Don'ts

- DON'T evaluate collected information only once or twice a year.

- DON'T organize and analyze the information without considering the questions you have asked about your program.

- DON'T organize test score data only on the basis of required reporting formats.

- DON'T organize information only in accordance with the usual quantitative breakouts, such as the following:
  - Percentages of right and wrong answers
  - Percentages of each kind of response

- DON'T evaluate only the information that is collected through monitoring.

Do's

- DO evaluate the information at times when results will be most useful for decision making.

- DO decide what criteria and levels of success or effectiveness are acceptable.

- DO organize the information so that the questions asked will be answered. Try to do the following:
  - Arrange teachers' responses to an attitude questionnaire on the basis of clusters of related questions.
  - Group students' scores in accordance with achievement, and look for differing patterns of right and wrong answers.
  - Group parents' responses in accordance with some distinguishing characteristic, such as upper-grade/lower-grade; and look for differing patterns of responses.

- DO evaluate information obtained through the quality review of the school plan, the formal assessments of students, and the end-of-year data concerning the attainment of objectives and the effectiveness of solution procedures.

Don'ts

- DON'T explain the relationships between the categories by looking only at superficial reasons.

- DON'T be content with just reporting the scores as the findings.

Do's

- DO explain the relationships (or lack of them) between the selected categories, using various elements making up the context of the program, such as the following:
  - School, staff, students, goals and objectives, budget, community, district, time of year, length of time in the reform effort, and use of volunteers or adults in the classroom.
  - Specific type of program, such as amount of student choice, multiage grouping, cross-age tutors, degree of individualization in social studies, science, and the like.
  - New staff, new building, earthquake safety, or late delivery of materials.

- DO determine the implications of the findings for future questions about the program. Implications should be stated with specificity. Examples could be the following:
  - Higher achieving groups score higher on only one type of question. (Should more specific information on overachieving groups be collected?)
  - Only teachers in grade three are satisfied with staff development activities.
  - Parents most satisfied with individualization are those who have only one child in school.

An Outline for Evaluation

The evaluation of the ongoing planning process concerns the organizing, analyzing, and interpreting of the information that has been collected through monitoring procedures.

You may consider adapting the following steps to your particular needs. You can use them to evaluate the information collected on your program.

A. **Set up the evaluation procedures.**

1. Decide how to organize and analyze the collected information so that the questions you have asked about your program will be answered by the results of your analysis.
2. Decide what levels of effectiveness and criteria for success will be used.

B. **Analyze the information that has been collected.**

1. Analyze all of the available and relevant information. Do not overlook plan critiques, end-of-year test results, or other measures of accomplishment.
2. Categorize the information, and make comparisons between the categories you have chosen. Look at the kind and degree of relationships that exist between and within the categories.

C. **Interpret the results of the analysis.**

1. Study the results to determine whether they are logical, considering the questions you have asked about the program.
2. Determine the best explanation of the results with regard to the context and the idiosyncrasies of the program.
3. Decide if the results raise new questions about the implementation of the program.

III. Making Decisions to Modify the Program

- How clearly established are the procedures for making decisions in order to modify the program?
- To what extent has the decision-making process provided for:
  - Using evaluation results
  - Determining need for change
  - Prioritizing those needs for change
- When need for change has been determined, how thoroughly has the decision-making process provided for:
  - Developing alternative solution procedures
  - Selecting from among alternatives
  - Implementing selected solution procedures
- To what extent have the modifications which occurred this year come about as a result of the established decision-making procedures?

The preceding questions from the "Program Quality Review Instrument–1976/77" are those that relate to what occurs after the evaluation process has begun. The use of evaluation findings to make the decision to change the program is usually the weakest link in planning. The following list of Do's and Don'ts may be used to review your program's progress. The outline which follows the list may be used as a reference.

Decision Making

Don'ts

- DON'T forget that to make *no decision* is to make a *decision.*
- DON'T use a decision-making process that is unknown or misunderstood by those most affected by the decision.
- DON'T establish decision-making procedures haphazardly or whimsically.
- DON'T allow decision-making processes to be established unilaterally, even if this saves time.
- DON'T forget that any established procedure must recognize that the principal has the ultimate responsibility for decisions at the school level.
- DON'T forget that informed, deliberate decision making has rewards that unsystematic decision making does not have.
- DON'T forget the constraints that affect the kind of decisions that can be made. These constraints include the following:
  - School code
  - Contracts
  - Budgets
  - Board policies and procedures

Do's

- DO make the decisions on the dates that you set during the monitoring.
- DO develop a decision-making process that is visible, usable, and understandable to those who will be most affected by any decisions to modify the program.
- DO consider the essential issues of establishing decision-making procedures, such as the following:
  - Who will make decisions?
  - What relative weight will each decision-maker's opinion have?
  - Who will make what type of decision?
    - Principal
    - Other administrators
    - Entire decision-making group
    - Grade levels or departments
    - Individuals (teachers, parents, volunteers, or aides)
  - Will anyone have veto power?
  - What kind of decision-making process will be used?
    - Who will provide input?
    - How will input be provided?
    - What will be defined as a problem?
    - What will constitute a decision?
    - Will voting, polling, or secret balloting be used?
    - How would a decision be revised, altered, amended, or reversed?
  - What rules about silence and conflict will be adopted?
    - How will conflict or diversity be handled?
    - How will different opinions be accepted by members?
    - How will conflicts be resolved?

Don'ts

- DON'T assume that *everyone* should be involved in *every* decision.
- DON'T decide to make changes in the program *solely* on the basis of whims, politics, or unilateral perceptions.
- DON'T attempt to make comprehensive changes, unless you are sure they are warranted.
- DON'T necessarily use the first (or the easiest, quickest, or safest) way to change the program.

Do's

- DO make decisions by using input from those with the most expertise in the given area.
- DO consider the evaluation findings in determining the need for and direction of change.
- DO consider other factors besides the evaluation findings that affect the course you ultimately select. These include aspects of cost and feasibility (politics, logistics, competence, and motivation).
- DO choose among the needs for change only those that are the most feasible and of highest priority.
- DO use the decision-making process to generate alternative ways of making changes.
- DO select from the alternatives you generated using criteria such as the following:
  - Creativity
  - Efficiency
  - Effectiveness
  - Practicality
  - Feasibility
  - Economy (time and resources)

Don'ts

- DON'T arbitrarily or impulsively select your course of action and thus bypass the decision-making process that you have established.

- DON'T think that just declaring that a change will be made will bring it about. Responsibility for making a change should be assigned.

- DON'T think that the dissemination of program changes is excessive communication or information overload.

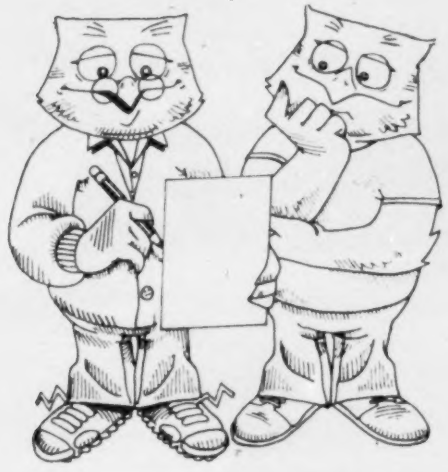
Do's

- DO keep track of the modifications you make in the program throughout the year, and check to see how they occurred. You should ask yourself the following questions:
  - Did you anticipate the changes in monitoring by asking the right questions about your program?
  - Did you make decisions that considered and reflected the evaluation findings?
  - Did you use the established decision-making process to determine the need for change?

- DO implement the changes that you have selected.

- DO make your written plan current by amending it to reflect the new program modifications.

- DO ensure that all the needed information about program modifications is communicated to those who will be affected by them.



An Outline for Decision Making

Evaluation findings are used in the ongoing planning process to make decisions to modify the program.

The following steps in decision making may be adapted for your own situation. You can use them in making decisions to modify your program.

A. **Establish procedures for making decisions to modify the program.**

1. Decide who participates in what kind of decisions.
2. Decide what is required for a decision.
3. Determine what kind of decision-making process will be used.
4. Decide what the rules about silence and conflict will be.

B. **Use the decision-making process established for modifying the program.**

1. Involve participants in decisions that require their respective expertise.
2. Determine and prioritize the needs for change from the evaluation findings.
3. Generate alternatives, and select from among them, considering constraints such as feasibility, law, policy, or contracts.
4. Implement the program modifications by making the plan current and proceeding accordingly.

Rules of "Thumb"

Don'ts

- DON'T get in the rut of having one group of individuals, who may be energetic and committed but often are unrepresentative and homogeneous, do everything.

- DON'T drop everything you have been doing to begin the ongoing planning process; instead, feed the information you obtain through various means into the process (such as board reports, internal "Monitor and Reviews," and the like).

- DON'T assume that the only way to have involvement is to have *only one* person make all the decisions or to have *everyone* involved in all the decisions.

- DON'T assume that ongoing planning means more paperwork and documentation. It should require less in the long run, if not generally, because many of the steps are actions, thought processes, and deliberations.

Do's

- DO establish a core group of supporters that is representative. An internalized process can be developed around this group, and participation can be expanded.

- DO ensure that different types of expertise, such as evaluation personnel, are represented.

- DO begin or continue using internal "Monitor and Reviews" to provide additional information for ongoing planning.

- DO consider using component committees to expand responsibility and to increase involvement in the ongoing planning process. To increase communication, members of the committees should be rotated.

- DO be aware of the benefits of an ongoing planning process. They are the following:
  - Less pressure, rush, and "springtime hassle" to prepare the next year's school plan
  - Enrichment of what is already happening
  - Team-building and cooperation
  - Responsiveness to program concerns of participants
  - Opportunity to distinguish between what is working and what is not and to build on what *is* working

Ongoing Planning Format

This section consists of worksheets on which an ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making process has been illustrated. These worksheets are related closely to Form A-127ES, page 7, which represents a condensed version of the total ongoing planning process.

Two examples, one for an instructional component and one for an instructional support component, are provided on the worksheets. By using such worksheets and using the examples as illustrations but not as models, you should be able to refine your ongoing planning process and to use it effectively throughout the year.

These forms will illustrate ongoing planning and the relationships of the three phases better if the pages are attached (end to end).

Monitoring

Questions, concerns, issues, or solution procedures	*Type of information to be collected*	*Key dates*	*Person(s) involved*	*Person(s) responsible*
A	B	C	D	E
	EXAMPLE I			
How closely do the prescribed activities and materials for mathematics relate to the diagnosed needs of students?	Diagnosed needs of students (Individual students are observed in the classroom to determine the frequency of diagnoses and the variety of instructional methods, materials, and activities.)	September through November	Members of the mathematics committee, teachers aides, students, and parent volunteers	Administrator and members of the mathematics committee
	Teachers' descriptions of the processes they use and the success they have in matching students' needs to activities	September through November		
	Perceptions of individual students, aides, and parent volunteers concerning the match between prescribed activities and materials and the diagnosed needs of students	September through November		
	EXAMPLE II			
How effective is the present training program for continuing parent volunteers?	Volunteer coordinator's observation of the degree to which skills addressed in the training program are being used	August through October	Parent volunteers and teachers	Volunteer coordinator
	Volunteers' responses to questionnaire evaluating the process and content of training immediately following training and three months following training	August and November		
	Teachers' responses to questionnaire regarding changes in the level of volunteer skills	October		

Evaluation

Criteria for success	*Organization of collected information*	*Analysis of information*	*Factors to be considered in interpreting results*	*Key dates*	*Person(s) involved in interpretation*
A	B	C	D	E	F
EXAMPLE I					
Close matches of prescribed activities and materials and diagnosed needs of students indicated in majority of cases	Organize collected information on the basis of frequency of diagnoses; variety of instructional methods; materials and activities; teachers' processes; successes; and perceptions of students, aides, and parent volunteers.	Compare information by grade levels, achievement levels, various learning needs, and sex. Compare parents' and students' perceptions of match to those of teachers and members of the mathematics committee.	Quality of instructional materials Types of students' needs emphasized Availability of materials Teachers' expertise in using diagnosis and prescription	Dec.	Mathematics committee
EXAMPLE II					
Some observable or indicated change in the performance of volunteers	Organize collected information on the basis of the various volunteer coordinators' observations, volunteers' questionnaire responses to content and process (immediate and after 3 months), and teachers' responses to questionnaire.	Analyze responses and observation reports by process information and content information. Compare teachers' comments and volunteers' responses after 3 months. Categorize all information collected by grade level.	Number of volunteers trained Number of volunteers responding to the questionnaire Degree of involvement of parents and teachers in planning the training	Dec.	Volunteer coordinator, volunteers, and teachers

Decision Making

Person(s) providing input and alternatives for decision making	*Person(s) responsible for decision making**	*Person(s) responsible for implementing decisions*	*Anticipated change(s) to be made in present program*	*Anticipated change(s) to be made in next year's program*
A	B	C	D	E
EXAMPLE I				
Mathematics committee and school staff	Mathematics committee	Administrator, mathematics committee, and staff	Greater emphasis will be placed on skill development, concept development, and application of knowledge. Alternative materials will be developed for those skill areas in which students have problems.	Successful and less successful processes for matching diagnoses and students' activities will be identified.
EXAMPLE II				
Volunteer coordinator, volunteers, and teachers	Volunteer coordinator	Volunteer coordinator	Additional training will be given in those skill areas needing emphasis, as identified in the evaluation. Small group sessions will be held.	The training of volunteers will be modified so that their knowledge and skills can be more effectively applied.

*School administrator has final responsibility – but to whom is it delegated?

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